



# National Fire Plan

## Managing the Impact of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment

## Cooperative Fire Protection - Volunteer Fire Assistance

The Volunteer Fire Assistance Program provides funds through States to volunteer fire departments serving communities to improve communication capabilities, provide critical wildland fire management training, and purchase protective fire clothing and equipment. These departments provide, at no cost, wildfire and emergency protection service to communities with populations of under 10,000. Volunteer Fire Departments provide services that reach 43% of the population, at an estimated value of \$36 billion per year.

The National Fire Plan Budget provides \$13,315,000 in National Fire Plan and base program funding for the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program.

- The Volunteer Fire Assistance program provides technical and financial assistance to volunteer fire departments in rural communities. These rural resources are often the first line of defense in meeting expanded protection needs for wildland urban interface fires. Of the more than 32,000 local fire agencies nationwide, 75% are volunteer fire departments.
- Volunteer Fire Assistance funding meets fewer than 10% of all requests received from volunteer fire departments. The 1994 Rural Fire Protection in America Report to Congress found that 50% of all volunteer fire departments do not have personal protective clothing, self-contained breathing apparatus, functional radio equipment, or adequate water supplies to protect their communities from fire. Many of these same departments are the first responders to help protect federal lands from wildfire and are most likely responsible for reducing federal fire suppression costs.

### FY 2002

States will be requested to focus funds in communities with at greatest risk of severe wildland fire. These funds should benefit approximately 6,500 communities.